
IMPACTING GOVERNANCE AND REACHING RURAL WOMEN THROUGH EXPERIENCE CAPITALIZATION

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The adoption of experience capitalization by the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (JEEViKA) in India has helped us disseminate the organisation's learnings and reach a wider, more diverse audience. This has resulted in the widespread adoption of the practices JEEViKA promotes for the development of agriculture, livestock rearing and health and nutrition.

Run by the government of the state of Bihar, JEEViKA is India's largest women's socio-economic empowerment programme, working directly with 9.4 million families, and is one of the country's flagship programmes for poverty alleviation. The objective of the programme is to diversify and enhance household-level incomes and improve access to and use of nutrition and sanitation services among rural households.

JEEViKA presently operates in more than 34,000 villages in Bihar. Under the programme, there are nearly 830,000 self-help groups (SHGs), which is the highest number in any state. Women who are part of these SHGs have collectively mobilised over €87 million in savings. Today, there are more than 400,000 women entrepreneurs in rural Bihar, all of whom have successfully established small businesses that not only provide additional incomes but also create new jobs in the rural economy.

The organisation has a three-tier operational architecture, with the state project management unit as the apex body, the district project coordination units in 38 districts, and the block project implementation units in 534 blocks. JEEViKA has a total of 5,830 employees based at these units. The project has engaged over 65,000 community resource persons to provide extension services to SHG members in the areas of financial inclusion, health and nutrition, agriculture and agri-allied extension services.

Knowledge management and communications in JEEViKA

JEEViKA's knowledge management programme intends to create, capture, share, distribute, leverage and archive knowledge for the organisation's internal use, to improve and enhance its implementation capabilities and service delivery mechanisms. The KM practices also intend to reach out to a wider external domain for effective policy advocacy. This is spearheaded by a programme coordinator, who is supported by a state project manager and project manager at the state project management unit, and 25 district communication managers at the district project coordination unit. By adopting various approaches, JEEViKA intends to cater to and reach out to the following audiences:

- Communities and beneficiaries – particularly rural women
- JEEViKA officials and staff at all levels within various initiatives
- National, State and District Governments and related departments
- Global audiences

The team has published thematic booklets and manuals for the dissemination of best practices on, for example, livestock rearing and health and sanitation; it organises

Cover Hundreds of thousands of rural women are now running their own businesses

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periodic seminars and workshops, and participates in state and district-level events, such as agri-tech shows, craft fairs and government-sponsored infotainment platforms, to more widely disseminate its communications products. Key communication outputs usually focus on the portrayal of success stories and project achievements.

Institutionalising experience capitalization

In April 2017, three JEEViKA officials were exposed to the experience capitalization approach as established by the International Fund for Agricultural Development and CTA, and they started exploring how this could strengthen JEEViKA's objectives. The training workshop organised by CTA exposed officials to the importance of critically analysing project successes and failures, and of identifying the gaps in areas of policy framing, capacity building, project implementation, and progress tracking.

The discussions amongst these officials during this training were the first steps for institutionalising the approach within JEEViKA. They decided to bring their ideas to top management after preparing a plan to integrate the process, which included activities and objectives as per the table below:

The trained officials confidently defended all the apprehensions of the senior management team and were successful in drawing support from the World Bank technical assistance team. They coordinated with various sectors to identify 15 project experiences and developed a structure to document these experiences. The experience capitalization framework was co-designed with the World Bank technical assistance team, who agreed to jointly develop the cases. A group of 15 members representing the JEEViKA senior management team and six members of the World Bank team jointly developed 10 experience capitalization cases by July 2017.

Capitalising on the initial success

Encouraged by their initial success to ingrain experience capitalization within their organisation, the initiators/facilitators developed further plans to sustain the process, as shown in Table 2.

A pool of 25 district communication managers were oriented on the use of different experience capitalization tools by JEEViKA officials, and case write-shops were conducted from October 2017 to March 2018. The resulting documents were peer reviewed, edited and compiled. The communication managers, all of whom are posted at the district level units, created a pool of 10-15 officials from the district

Table 1: Ideas brought up by the team

	Activities	Objective
1.	Concept sharing with the senior management	Broad acceptance of experience capitalization within the organisation
2.	Pitch experience capitalization during the August 2017 World Bank mission	To draw attention and support from officials at all levels
3.	Constitute and train a team of senior officials and other members from the KMC team	Planning and completion of experience capitalization cases with JEEViKA
4.	Publication of a <i>Learning Note</i> series	To establish the proof of concept at the apex unit of operation

Table 2: A plan to sustain the process

Activities		Objective
1.	Restructure the KMC strategy to incorporate experience capitalization and include it within the annual action plan and budget	To sustain experience capitalization by incorporating the approach in the results framework
2.	Capacitate the KMC team on experience capitalization by using staff learning funds/ on-the-job training funds	To nurture a team and to engage more facilitators to extend experience capitalization processes at all levels of project operations
3.	Competency mapping of the district communication managers	To better utilise the potential of the communication managers
4.	Create four sub-teams based on the competencies of the communication managers, including a documentation team, an illustrations team, a video production team and a group of translators	More efficient and time-bound results
5.	Incorporate the development of experience capitalization cases as the key result areas and key performance indicators of communication managers	To generate experience capitalization cases on a continuous basis
6.	Publish monthly newsletters and quarterly magazines which include experience capitalization cases	Dissemination of the results of the different experience capitalization processes
7.	Establish partnerships with local print and electronic media	Wider circulation and dissemination
8.	Produce videos on experience capitalization cases	Reaching a larger audience
9.	Nurture community reporters	Promote a community-driven experience capitalization process

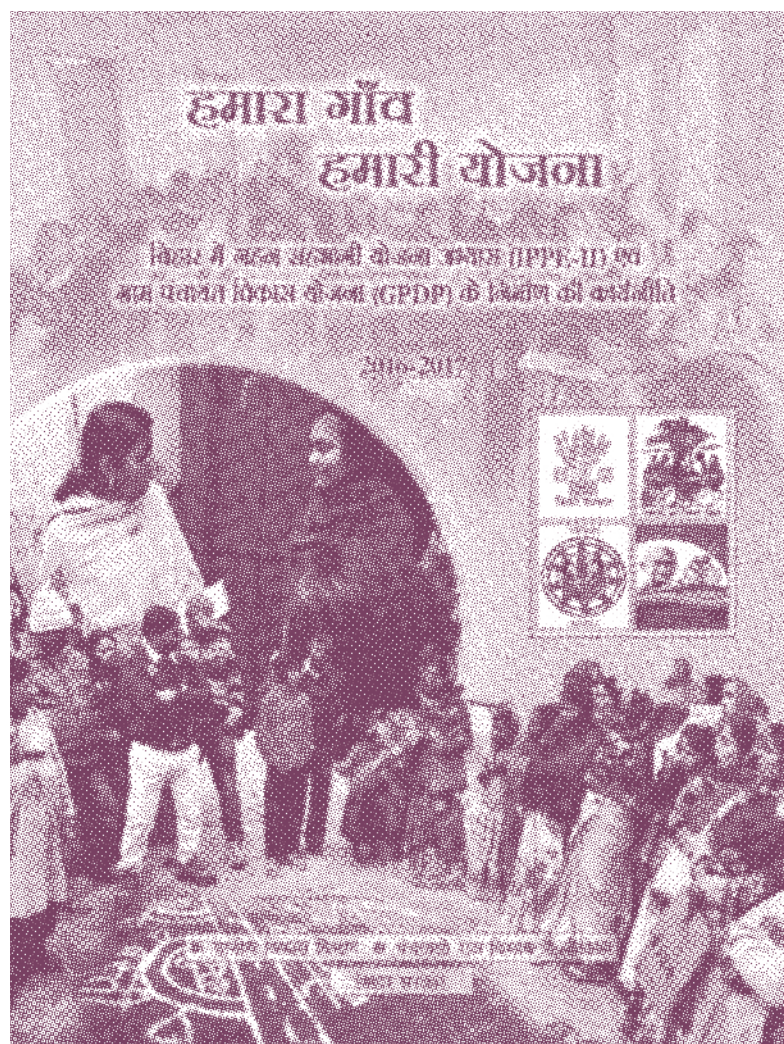
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and block units to conduct experience capitalization workshops amongst themselves to generate experience capitalization cases in their respective districts.

Strategic publications, such as monthly newsletters, a quarterly magazine called *The Change Makers*, booklets and a *Learning Note* series, were designed and launched in June 2017 to reach a wide range of audiences. Partnerships with print and electronic media houses were also established for the publication and telecast of the documented cases. And the project leaders or “champions” of the cases documented were further trained to share their experiences in public, and express the challenges they faced regarding the adoption of the project-promoted best practices.

Furthermore, experience capitalization was incorporated into the job description and key result areas of the communication managers, and as a performance indicator for the implementation units. This resulted in the development of several cases on varied thematic areas, from financial inclusion to running farm enterprises.

Below Different publications help reach a wide range of audiences



Successes

The World Bank and JEEViKA jointly launched “*A Decade of Rural Transformation*” during the project completion ceremony organised at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington, DC. The publication featured on both of the organisations’ websites, and was widely disseminated and applauded. The cases aptly credited the contributions made by each official and thus motivated and helped to ingrain the processes referenced. The published cases were referred to when preparing the implementation plan for the next project phase of the World Bank assisted project (the Bihar Transformative Development Project). The publication was also acknowledged by the Ministry of Rural Development and was recommended as a resource book for the implementation of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (a flagship programme of the government aiming at social and economic empowerment by promoting vibrant community institutions. The mission is being implemented in 28 states of India).

Twenty-eight officials, representing all three operation units, were trained in experience capitalization techniques, and they formed the core experience capitalization facilitation team. This team invited a larger group of 75 officials to join. Eighty-nine experience capitalization cases were developed and featured in the various publications produced. Some of the cases have been adopted as teaching examples in training modules delivered by JEEViKA officials to frontline workers and community resource persons. These include different “products” such as a cartoon series.

Videos have been developed to demonstrate the use of best practice packages for agriculture, health and hygiene and livestock rearing, among others, with the narrative woven into a story format. The practitioners in the videos share their experiences of adopting the practices, explaining the challenges they faced as well as the outcomes. A digital library of over 300 community videos is now available on the website. These videos are used for training and agriculture extension purposes, and the adoption of the practices is gauged through a Management Information System-based software.

Just as important, the SHG members have learnt to share their experiences systematically, and have used various platforms to mobilise their fellow community members and influence policies.

Challenges

Prior to introducing the process of experience capitalization, knowledge management processes at JEEViKA revolved around conveying best practices and following a strict protocol for publications. Any communication products generally described success stories and had a limited analytical agenda. The culture of project gratification was so deeply ingrained that it was challenging to consider a critical analysis that would help identify intervention failures and lessons. A continuous facilitation and peer reviews assisted in the wider adoption of the experience capitalization methodologies.

On the other hand, we also had time and motivation constraints. Initially, it was assumed that if the senior officials were trained in experience capitalization, the approach would be automatically accepted. However, their busy schedules limited their engagement in mentoring and training district and block-level officials. Further, although most of the thematic managers agreed that experience capitalization is an effective tool, they were reluctant

to get started as they saw that this demands an in-depth and time-consuming probing of project experiences. The process was also not considered as an important deliverable by some.

Pitching the concept of experience capitalization at the senior management level at an opportune time is important to see a wider acceptance of the approach. Involving senior management officials, and providing them with sufficient support, also helps to keep interests alive.

Piloting the concept in a smaller group by involving selected senior officials resulted in the publication (*"A Decade of Rural Transformation"*), and its wider dissemination helped in ingraining experience capitalization processes within the organisation. Incorporating the steps of an experience capitalization process within the organisation's performance indicators was important to keep the managers motivated and willing to facilitate the processes. Chalking out concrete plans with purpose and defined objectives helped achieve the desired results in a time-bound manner.

Below Sharing JEEViKA's success stories at the World Bank headquarters, Washington, DC



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The way ahead

Experience capitalization has helped disseminate the learnings of our different interventions in a more effective manner. The next step is to develop a dissemination strategy catering to the different audiences that the programme works with. The project has already disseminated learnings through videos, posters, pamphlets and other tools. In order to reach all of its 9.4 million rural women, a television programme at prime time is planned to be screened. The show intends to share experience capitalization cases, featuring the local “champions”.

A partnership with a local newspaper to publish a fortnightly tabloid dedicated to the experience capitalization cases is also planned for June 2019. The partnership will involve community reporters who will be trained in photography and audio reporting. Their stories will then be published and circulated by the daily newspaper. This initiative will exclusively cover rural news and rural experiences.

Capitalising experience at scale is our new motto, and the institutionalization process aggravates the pace of outreach. Experience capitalization can impact project delivery mechanisms and create an environment of learning within and outside an organisation. JEEViKA has started the process and now aspires to maximise its impact.



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